

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated September 23, 2004, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections.

The specification was objected to as containing embedded hyperlinks. In response thereto, the appropriate paragraphs of the specification have been amended to avoid any possibility that the text would be interpreted as a hyperlink.

Original claims 1-8 were rejected on the basis of various references. In order to clarify the distinctions between the present invention and the subject matter of those references, claims 1-8 have been cancelled, and new claims 9-25 are presented herein. For the reasons presented below, it is respectfully submitted that the cited references do not anticipate, nor otherwise suggest, the claimed subject matter.

The principal references that were relied upon the rejections of the claims, namely the Shih et al. patent and the Hirashima et al. patent, are directed to data replication techniques. However, the present invention is not directed to replication, per se, as might be implied from the rejections. Rather, it is directed to the authentication of users to network resources, such as servers, particularly where the resources might be distributed over a variety of locations, such as data centers. As noted in the background portion of the application, in the past it was conventional to use databases to store the authentication information. The use of databases to implement authentication has certain limitations associated with it, particularly in a distributed environment. To overcome these limitations, the present invention uses a different approach to store and disseminate the authentication information. More particularly, a directory structure is employed as the mechanism for storing the authentication information. One of the significant advantages of using a directory structure is the fact that it can be easily replicated to a variety of locations, in a much simpler manner than databases.


It is respectfully submitted that the cited references do not disclose, nor otherwise suggest, the use of a directory structure as the mechanism for maintaining user authentication information. In particular, they do not disclose a directory having the type of structure that is now recited in the claims. For example, claim 9 recites that the directory structure comprises a root node, a first level of nodes below the root node that are associated with respective organizations, and at least one further level of nodes that identify users who are authorized to access the network devices assigned to the organizations assigned with their parent first level nodes, as well as the authentication information for those users. The rejection of claims 3 and 4 referred to the directory structure illustrated in Figure 5 of the Shih patent. However, the patent does not disclose a directory having a structure of the type recited in the currently pending claims. Nor does it disclose that a directory can be used to authorize user access to network resources, in the manner recited in claim 9.

It is respectfully submitted that the other cited references likewise do not disclose the claimed subject matter.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections based upon the cited references, and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Date: March 23, 2005

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